

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 03743 051220Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 /057 W  
-----055770 060210Z /64

R 051200Z OCT 77  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8339  
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBSSY NEW DELHI  
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, CE  
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT PASSES CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT FOR STRONG  
PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM

REF: COLOMBO 3706 (NOTAL)

1.BEGIN SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 4 AFTER LESS THAN THREE HOURS OF DEBATE,  
THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY (NSA) BY A VOTE OF 128 TO 0 PASSED THE  
SECOND AMENDMENT TO THE REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHING  
A STRONG PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM. THE AMENDMENT WILL BECOME LAW  
WHEN SIGNED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUT WILL  
BECOME EFFECTIVE ONLY AT A DATE TO BE DETERMINED BY PRIME  
MINISTER J.R. JAYEWARDENE AND WEHN PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE. END  
SUMMARY

2. BEFORE MRS. BANDARANAIKE LED THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP)  
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OUT OF THE NSA PRIOR TO THE VOTE, SHE ATTACKED THE AMENDMENT AS  
DESTRUCTIVE TO THE FUNDAMENTALS OF DEMOCRACY BY ESTABLISHING ONLY  
ONE INSTRUMENT OF POWER-THE PRESIDENT. CONCOMITANT WITH  
AGGRANDIZEMENT OF POWER TO THE PRESIDENT, SHE ARGUED, WILL  
BE A REDUCTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION TO  
THAT OF A PRESIDENTIAL PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER AND A  
DIMINUTION OF THE POWERS OF PARLIAMENT. SHE CHIDED THE

PM FOR NOT LIVING UP TO HIS PROMISE TO CONSULT WITH ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND FOR NOT HAVING PUBLICIZED THE FULL TEXT OF THE AMENDMENT.

3. THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT (TULF), A. AMIRTHALINGAM, AND HIS PARTY REMAINED IN THE NSA BUT DID NOT VOTE. GIVING HIS REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE DEBATE AND NOT VOTING, AMIRTHALINGAM SAID THAT THE FORM OF SRI LANKA'S GOVERNMENT IS IRRELEVANT TO THE TAMIL PEOPLE AS LONG AS THEY CONTINUE TO BE DENIED THEIR BASIC RIGHTS. ONE MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITION, S.THONDAMAN, REPRESENTING THE CEYLON WORKERS CONGRESS, VOTED WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THONDAMAN, WHO IS NOMINALLY PRESIDENT OF THE TULF, HAS TRADITIONALLY SUPPORTED THE RULING UNITED NATIONAL PARTY.

4. WHEN THE LAW IS PROMULGATED, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL AUTOMATICALLY BECOME PRESIDENT WITH STRONG EXECUTIVE POWERS, RELINQUISHING HIS PRIME MINISTERSHIP TO A YET UNNAMED SUCCESSOR. HE WILL REMAIN AS PRESIDENT REGARDLESS OF POSSIBLE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT AND SUBSEQUENT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS UNTIL THE ELECTION OF 1983. AT THAT TIME, A NEW PRESIDENT WILL BE CHOSEN IN A NATIONAL ELECTION.  
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5. COMMENT. WITH THE OVERWHELMING UNP MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT THE AMENDMENT WOULD BE PASSED. AS NOTED IN REFTTEL, HOWEVER, THE PM BY SEEMING TO RUSH THE AMENDMENT THROUGH IS LEAVING HIMSELF OPEN TO CRITICISM THAT HE MIGHT HAVE AVOIDED HAD HE ADHERED TO A MORE LEISURELY PACE ALLOWING FULLER PUBLIC DEBATE. ADDITIONAL CRITICISM WILL BE LEVELED AT HIM FOR RENEGING ON HIS PROMISE TO CONSULT ON THE AMENDMENT WITH ALL POLITICAL PARTIES. AMIRTHALINGAM VERIFIED THAT THE PM DID NOT CONSULT WITH THE TULF AS EXPECTED AND THAT HIS FAILURE TO DO SO WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT.  
WRIGGINS

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 05-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977COLOMB03743  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 COLOMBO 3706  
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**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PINT, CE  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
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